

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Release at 4:00 p.m. EDT
Tuesday, May 26, 1987

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
UPON SWEARING IN WILLIAM WEBSTER AS THE
DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Langley, Virginia

May 26, 1987

In gathering here today to swear in your new Director, William Webster, we have come together for an event that will shape our Nation's history and affect the course of freedom throughout the world.

The Central Intelligence Agency finds its roots in the earliest days of the Republic. General George Washington said that intelligence service demands those on "Whose firmness and fidelity we may safely rely." And during World War II, dedicated Americans answered the call -- sometimes the ultimate call -- in the Office of Strategic Services. Their creativity and achievement remain the building blocks for today.

Among those was the late Bill Casey, whose determination and personal courage in the clandestine effort against Adolph Hitler meant the difference between victory and defeat. While the world changed in 45 years since the O.S.S. was founded, his capacity for leadership did not, nor did the devotion of the men and women of our intelligence services.

From the days in the late seventies where we found America's intelligence capabilities reduced and demoralized, today our intelligence community performs a vital role in the struggle against international terrorism and drug trafficking. It exposes and counters the huge, menacing apparatus of Soviet espionage and propaganda and scouts future challenges.

Unfortunately, many of your successes can only be celebrated in private. But those of us in the Executive Branch and the Congress know about these gallant efforts and recognize, for example, verifying arms reduction agreements and the continued expansion of freedom must rest on a solid intelligence foundation. So we have a responsibility to assure the American people that they have the best intelligence service in the world, and that is staffed by honorable men and women who work within the framework of our laws and shared values.

It has become fashionable in some quarters to act as if the Central Intelligence Agency were somehow not completely a part of our own government -- as if it were not constantly working against hostile powers who threaten the security of the American people. But our liberty, our way of life, requires eternal vigilance, the United States cannot survive in the modern world without a vigorous intelligence agency capable of acting swiftly and in secret. So long as I am President, I will never consent to see our intelligence capability undermined.

As Bill Casey said only a short time before his death, this is not an arena "For tender egos or shrinking violets. The clashes and ideas can get rough; no one's views are protected from challenge. Nor is the CIA the place for the cynical or the merely curious. It is instead a place for people who are aware of the world and who are ready and willing to make a commitment to serve their country in a challenging environment where one person can, indeed, make a difference."

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William Hedgcock Webster is just such a man. After service with the naval reserve during two wars, he began a legal career of extraordinary accomplishment that would last a quarter of a century, and culminate in distinguished terms as Judge of the U.S. District Court for Eastern Missouri and U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eight Circuit. In 1978, President Carter appointed him Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The late seventies were a difficult time for the FBI -- and in leaving the bench, Judge Webster was forfeiting a lifetime post and work that he loved. Even so, he stated that he looked on the assignment as a "great adventure." Even so, he asserted his absolute determination, "To maintain the high standards and traditions of the FBI" Asked why he was so willingly taking upon himself so heavy a burden, Judge Webster answered simply: "I am an old Navy man . . . and I heard a Bosun's pipe . . ."

That remark alone says a great deal about the Judge. He does not look upon his Nation's call to duty as something onerous, something to be endured. He looks upon it instead as something inviting, something even invigorating -- a Bosun's pipe. And during these past nine years, Judge Webster has done more than maintain the standards of the FBI. He has raised them.

The Bureau under Judge Webster has for the first time become expert in drug investigations and white collar crime. It has made innovative use of high-technology equipment. And I have often spoken of the need for dramatic, historic strikes against organized crime and praised the FBI's brilliant role in this endeavor. Morale in the FBI has soared -- today the Bureau is a proud institution, thoroughly imbued with a sense of public service. And confidence in the Bureau on the part of Congress, the President and -- most important -- the American people -- this confidence is strong and vital.

Judge Webster, I know that as you leave the FBI, you leave behind much that you will miss. And I know that your colleagues at the Bureau will want to join me as, on behalf of the American people, I thank you for a job well done.

Now the Bosun's pipe has sounded.

In becoming Director today of the Central Intelligence Agency, Judge Webster is stepping up to the leadership of an institution that by its very nature is a likely subject of controversy. Yet it is also irreplaceable. The CIA routinely places demands upon its employees that would elsewhere be deemed outrageous. Yet it offers them the satisfaction of keeping freedom's candle burning.

And now, Judge Webster, we turn over to you the stewardship of this devoted group of men and women. Their mission is nothing less than the defense of liberty. Just consider the Agency's history. And although the specific undertakings must remain secret, today this agency uses all its resources to advance the cause of freedom.

So, Judge Webster, we ask you to maintain this agency's high standards, as you pledged to maintain those of the FBI; we ask you to lead the Central Intelligence Agency on to still greater service to our nation. And we know that, given your service at the FBI -- given your entire career -- in leading this great and vital institution, you will make it greater still.

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